Approved For Release 2000/04/13 : CIA-RDP69B00596R000100090011-5

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DDS&T-5492-66

29 November 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Officer, DDS&T

SUBJECT : Project Officer's Handbook

1. As you requested I have briefly commented on what I consider to be the basic discrepancies between the practical usage and limitations of the automated contract information file and the expected usage as described by subject document. These comments are annotated below with the pertinent paragraph numbers in the handbook.

a. 1.5.1.1 - System Description.

This paragraph states that the data base includes information which will insure early recognition of potential failure to meet delivery and expenditure schedules, and "the inherent nature of the computer capability . . . permits a quick response to a variety of questions frequently posed . . ."

FACT: The IBM 7010 program assigned to this data file allows periodic input of contractor and inspection reports under "DUE" and "RECEIVED" headings. The program is not capable of selecting only the latest data in such a periodic field nor can it compare a "DUE" date with a "RECEIVED" date to determine that a report is overdue. The sample output format section on contractor reports and project officer reports as shown under 1.5.1.6.1 and 1.5.1.6.5 (Glossary) and glossary numbers 41-47 are not consistent with the current program. This would require a considerable reprogramming effort. Refer to additional comment on DUE LIST (1.5.1.5).

b. 1.5.1.2 (1.5.1.6.1) - Printout Schedule.

Usage to date indicates that Special Requirements have placed more of a burden on the system than the scheduled items. With reference to the decentralized (see 1.5.1.3) input/update function, practice has proven that a straight 80/80 listing of the master tape is more

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useful as a control document than the formatted master listing. The former also requires approximately 1/6 the amount of computer time required by the latter.

Refer, also, to comments on Due Lists (1.5.1.5).

c. 1.5.1.3 - Security and Control.

States that the M.I.O. has responsibility for maintaining and updating the data base. This implies the mechanics of coding the data onto key-punching formats.

FACT: This mechanical function has almost entirely been assigned to the "ADP Coordinator" in each Office in line with a preferred decentralization policy.

d. 1.5.1.4.a. and b. - Initial Input.

Refer to comment on 1.5.1.3.

e. 1.5.1.5.a - Project Officer Due Lists.

It should be noted in passing that a serious objection has been raised to this report by most of the Offices. Complaints have been that it imposes an unnecessary burden on the monitor; that it does not contain enough information for him to certify to its accuracy; that the information required must be manually extracted from contract files, etc. The inference is that the monitors consider this to be interference by staff people to whom they are not responsible. Actually, I do not quarrel with the concept but feel that a more useful report might be designed for assisting the monitor.

Finally, it should be noted that the overall concept of the Handbook's purpose includes daily updating, a procedure not feasible with this type of batch processing system.

2. In summary, the requirement of the Handbook can be filled by modifying, converting or reprogramming the existing machine routines. Certain collateral factors must be kept in mind in analyzing and planning what amounts to a redesign of the system.

a. As the system now stands for the IBM 7010 application, the minimum requirement is addition of arithmetic and compare routines and input/output reformatting.

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b. The 7010 is being phased out so this will require converting our system to the 360 system in the near future. This raises the question (which OCS should answer) of whether it would be more economical to write an entirely new system program rather than to modify or convert the old one. (This also impinges on the current redesign of the system for MRO contract information.)

c. After generally surveying the requirements for a total integrated management information system I have concluded that such a system is not really feasible without on-line remote terminals. This conclusion is concretely supported by the experience of organizations who have successfully implemented such applications. These applications are few in number to date due to lack of experience by computer systems analysts and programmers in their use. Generally speaking, usage design is five years behind hardware availability. Each day of delay increases this lag exponentially. OCS is no exception and is just beginning a 12-18 month experimental phase with a few remote installations. DD/S&T should definitely be involved in the experimental stage for several reasons:

(1) We should set the example for the offices, some of whom have already ordered remote terminal installations.

(2) The usage experience, even in the experimental stage is as important to us as to the software designers.

(3) The contract information file can be updated on a daily and error-free basis and made quickly responsive to a variety of random queries by all levels of management, as envisioned by the Handbook.

(4) It will promote design flexibility for expansion of this basic system to include other data bases.

(This impinges on the DDS responsibility for designing a total information system which is a major influence on the thinking of the Director of OCS in responding to requirements with his limited resources.)

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Management Information Officer
Directorate of
Science and Technology

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